

### iii) Will we abide in Him together?

'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.' John 15:7-8 NRSV

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Eph 4:16

We each have an individual responsibility to abide in Him & to let His words abide in us but we also have a responsibility to help each other as a Church.

*'From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.'* Eph 4:16

Our world has become very individualistic but true growth comes with others;

As we 'love each other deeply' 1 P 4:8.

As we encourage one another 1 Thess 5:11

As we are 'devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.' Rms 12:10

As we 'in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.' Phil 2:3,4

That's God's vision for His Church, it's exciting - will you be part of it?



#### Pause for Personal Prayer



*'From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.'*

Do you know your own part? - Pause to pray.

#### Discuss



- What helps or hinders you from playing your own part?
- How can you support others in playing their part?

#### Taking it Further

Pray for yourself and for those God puts on your heart in Church. That we may each grow to play our part, bear much fruit and glorify Him.

## 3) All Saints Church - Branches in Christ

The final picture of the Church which we will look at in these studies, is of ourselves as branches in Christ the Vine.

John 15 may be familiar to you but ask to see it with new eyes and a new heart.

As branches in the vine we see a beautiful picture ...

of rest,

of agreement with Him

of pruning where necessary

and of fruitfulness to His glory.

This is the Church in her God-given glory.

The growth and glory in our lives & in our Church comes from God.

Let's enter in as we study.

#### A suggested outline for the session

Open with worship and prayer

Divide your time between the 3 sections

In each of the 3 sections ...

- . Ask someone to read the scripture & reflection
- . Pause for a few minutes of personal prayer
  - . Then discuss the questions given
- . At the end allow 10mins for personal prayer

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## i) His Branches

'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' John 15:4,5



We forget the picture so easily and we struggle as individuals & as a Church to do what only God can do.

This beautiful picture of the Church is eternally and beautifully true ...

Jesus Himself is the Vine. He is the head of His church.

We are the branches – part of Him, remaining, abiding in Him.

It's not our role to work to try to bear fruit, that's Jesus' work.

The Vine needs branches for the sap of His Spirit to flow through, to produce His fruit and to carry the fruit He grows.

The Vine needs the branches, but the fruit and the glory are God's.

Fruit starts small and grows to maturity, growth takes time.

'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified' Is 49:3 NRSV

### Pause for Personal Prayer



Are you remaining (abiding) in him or are you struggling?

### Discuss



- Have you ever found yourself struggling rather than abiding – share.
- Share your experience of the difference which 'abiding' brings.
- Fruit starts small and takes time to grow – discuss.

## ii) Pruned to be fruitful



'every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful ... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me ...

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.' John 15:2,4,7,8

We long as individuals & as a Church to be fruitful, so what is our part in this?

I'd like to suggest (to myself as much as anyone else!) that it's to ...

Stop striving in our own strength.

To allow Him to prune us and to lovingly discipline us (Hebrews 12:5-12).

To remain in Him and welcome His words to remain in us – to deeply read the Bible, allow His word to dwell in us richly Col 3:16 & change us.

That's the condition – then as His words 'remain in us 'whatever we wish' will have become what He wishes. Then we can ask and 'it will be done for you'.

As branches abiding in Him, His words remaining in us we are rightly placed for His Spirit to flow through us to produce His fruit.

There He begins to share His heart with us and each branch begins to bear fruit in the way and in the place He desires.

For some it's to share His heart and bear His fruit in our families, our work places & communities, for others it's in 'Church' but always to His glory.

### Pause for Personal Prayer



'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you' - pause to pray.

### Discuss



- How do we 'remain in Him' - discuss.
- How can we let His word remain in us? – share what helps you.
- Has God begun to share His heart with you over a matter?